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RANKING MEMBER, TRANSPORTATION AND
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Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
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July 23, 2020

The Honorable Nancy Pelosi
Speaker
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Mitch McConnell
Majority Leader
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Kevin McCarthy
Republican Leader
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Chuck Schumer
Minority Leader
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senate Majority Leader McConnell, Senate Minority Leader Schumer, Speaker Pelosi,
Leader McCarthy,

As you begin negotiations on what items to include in the Phase IV COVID-19 Relief Package, we urge you to include a requirement that our schools must provide an in-person option for schooling in order to receive any federal funding. As the 2020-2021 school year approaches, it is important to give parents living across our great nation the option of physically sending their children to school if that is an option they would like to utilize.

As you are aware, there are concerns among families about an online-only education system to begin the 2020-2021 school year. There are millions of parents who work jobs that would not allow them to stay at home or have other duties that would prevent them from overseeing their children's online education. Parents need to be able to have the options to make the best choices for their students' education.

For many parents, online learning has not been a suitable replacement for in person instruction. According to a recent Brookings Institute study on the impacts of learning loss during COVID-19 school closures, "students may be nearly a full year behind in math compared to what we would observe in normal conditions". This is simply unacceptable for our students, and many students may never be able to recover and make up for this lost time. Online-only instruction will only make this learning deficit grow for our next generation.

It is important to note that science and the facts support parents who wish to send their children to school. In a recent NBC Nightly News report, five out of five doctors interviewed agreed that the benefits of children learning in the classroom far outweighed the risks. This is also the position of the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP), who have noted the lack of

learning from online instruction, the increased worrying in behavioral health problems, and increased rates of child abuse. The AAP noted that school-age children are not driving the spread of the virus at the same rate as adults; in fact, the AAP noted that children were playing a much smaller role in driving the spread of COVID-19. Only two percent of all COVID-19 cases are school-aged children, and doctors and the AAP do not believe this will significantly increase when schools re-open.

We can re-open our schools for students and find ways to keep our teachers and students safe. As you recall, the *CARES Act* appropriated billions of dollars to K-12 education to provide resources to schools to purchase technology for hybrid instruction, personal protective equipment, and other resources needed to bring kids back to school. These resources were appropriated with the understanding that our children's education would not be impacted, and our children would receive the same level of education that they were receiving prior to the school closures. As you can see from the study and from the AAP, this has unfortunately not been the case.

Should parents not feel comfortable with sending their children back to the classrooms and chose to continue with online education, they should also be allowed to do so. On behalf of the millions of parents who would like in person instruction for their own children, we are asking that you include the requirement that our schools provide the in-person instruction option in the upcoming COVID-19 relief package in order to receive any of the federal assistance.

Sincerely,



Debbie Lesko
Member of Congress

Rep. Matt Gaetz

Rep. Andy Biggs

Rep. Steve King

Rep. Scott Perry

Rep. Andy Harris, M.D.